Foundations

Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success

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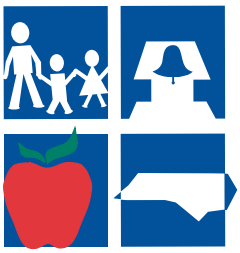

Public Schools of North Carolina

State Board of Education
Howard N. Lee, Chairman

Department of Public Instruction
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http://www.ncpublicschools.org

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

While early childhood has long been an exciting and dynamic field, only in recent years has it begun to receive the attention it deserves. The body of knowledge describing how young children learn has grown rapidly, along with an understanding of the benefits of high-quality early childhood programs. With this increased attention, teachers of young children are expected to know and to do more than ever before.

With all of this in mind, the Department of Public Instruction invited representatives from a variety of early childhood professions to participate in the development of North Carolina's first Early Learning Standards. After many months of thoughtful collaboration, the task force now proudly presents the fruit of its work: *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success.*

The task force worked diligently to create standards that would provide a common vision for North Carolina's early childhood programs and reflect the diversity of the children we serve. It is our hope that this publication will strengthen the relationships among these programs and improve the care and education of North Carolina's preschoolers.

Foundations is dedicated to everyone who serves North Carolina's preschoolers. Through your work, you are building a foundation for the future. Let's do all in our power to ensure that it is a bright one!

Sincerely,

Patricia N. Willoughby

Acknowledgments

This publication was made possible through the collaboration of a great number of professionals involved in early childhood education in North Carolina.

For their leadership and ongoing efforts on behalf of this project, a special acknowledgment to Lucy Roberts, Cindy Bagwell, Eva Phillips, Kathy Baars, Don Carter, and Amy Smith of the Department of Public Instruction's Early Childhood Section in the Instructional Services Division and the Special Programs Section in the Exceptional Children's Division.

For their assistance with photography featured in this publication, we thank the children and teachers of Alexander Wilson Elementary School and the Alamance-Burlington School System, and also the Cabarrus County Schools Preschool Program.

Grateful thanks as well to the members of the Early Learning Standards Task Force, listed here, for the invaluable contribution of their knowledge, expertise, and support.

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About this publication

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction convened an esteemed committee of early childhood educators and parents from across the state to work on this document. During their many months of work, members of the group studied research, looked at other state standards, and considered policy statements from national organizations to develop the initial draft of the Widely Held Expectations.

To ensure consistency, they examined the North Carolina Kindergarten Standard Course of Study and various curricula that are widely used in North Carolina. Additionally, they reviewed all appropriate research literature to make sure the expectations were inclusive of children from a variety of circumstances and with differing levels of ability.

The committee then invited feedback on the Widely Held Expectations in a variety of ways. Comments from the public were gathered during a series of eight focus groups held across the state. Participants included members of the SUCCESS Network and educators from public schools, Head Start, More at Four, Smart Start, private child-care programs, and colleges and universities.

The document was also posted on the Department of Public Instruction website. Expert reviewers within North Carolina and across the country were asked to provide their thoughts and guidance. The committee thanks the many friends of early education who so generously aided in the development of this book.

Contents

Introduction

Children's experiences and the skills and characteristics they develop during the preschool years are critically important to their success later in school. What children learn between birth and the time they start kindergarten lays the foundation for their learning and development for years to come.[1]

The National Research Council recently released a comprehensive review of child development and early education. In it, national experts concluded that we previously underestimated children's cognitive abilities and the concepts they can understand if they are exposed to age-appropriate and stimulating learning opportunities.[2]

For children to reach their full potential during these early years, adults around them must provide an environment and experiences that promote growth and learning. *Foundations* is designed to help early educators, parents, and others do just that by describing the particular skills and abilities that are important for children's success and providing ideas for fostering their development.

North Carolina has had a long and significant commitment to providing quality early education and intervention services for our youngest citizens. This is evident in Smart Start, More at Four, and numerous other early childhood initiatives. Public schools have also made a significant commitment to providing early care and education services. More than 40,000 preschool-age children were served in public schools in 2003-04. The Preschool Disabilities Program has been mandated in all public schools since 1987. Title I preschool programs, Even Start, Head Start, and Developmental Day Programs are other examples of the many ways our public schools are helping prepare children for success in school.

With this investment in early care and education has come an increasing need to examine important dimensions of school readiness. In June 2000, the North Carolina Ready for School Goal Team defined it in terms of the characteristics of children and schools that facilitate school readiness. Adopted by the State Board of Education and endorsed by the North Carolina Partnership for Children, this definition laid the foundation for the state's efforts to promote children's readiness for school and schools' readiness to receive them.[3]

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has led several additional efforts to support quality early education. *The North Carolina Guide for the Early Years* outlines recommended practices. The Emergent Literacy Projects are designed to improve literacy experiences in early childhood classrooms. The Memorandum of Understanding, signed in May 2000 by DPI and the Department of Health and Human Services, outlines key elements in promoting safe and healthy environments in all early care and education settings. *Learning Through the Eyes of a Child*, a best teaching practices guide published in 2002, specifies how classroom environments can promote children's learning.

North Carolina has worked hard to improve the quality of early care and education programs, both within public schools and in other settings. And while these efforts are important, one area has not been addressed until now: articulation of the specific skills and characteristics of preschool children.

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1 See Bibliography, *Early Intervention*

2 National Research Council, *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001).

3 C. Scott-Little and K. Maxwell, *School Readiness in North Carolina: Strategies for Defining, Measuring, and Promoting Success for All Children* (Greensboro, N.C.: UNCG Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE, 2000).

Early educators across the state often asked, "What should I be helping children to learn before they start kindergarten?" While the *North Carolina Kindergarten Standard Course of Study* describes expectations for children's growth and learning during kindergarten, early educators had no resource to help them set priorities for their preschool programs. This document gives them that tool.

This book is a companion to our earlier publications that describe quality early childhood programming. Its purpose is to help educators plan their curriculum. It is not a mandate or a litmus test for whether children are "ready" for kindergarten. Instead, think of the Widely Held Expectations as a lens through which to view the curriculum, the learning environment, and the everyday activities children experience.

The Widely Held Expectations that make up the central focus of this publication were created to provide a common set of age-appropriate developmental standards for children three, four, and five years old who are not yet age-eligible for kindergarten. They were written to include all children in preschool environments, taking into account their individual differences and uniqueness.

Ensuring that children are ready for school does not happen automatically. It is the responsibility of the adults in their lives to provide the environment and experiences needed to develop the characteristics described in the Widely Held Expectations. Building on the quality programming that already exists in our state, the hope is that this new publication will serve as a common vision for early childhood programs, as well as a resource for educators, parents, and others who care deeply about our state's young children.

Guiding Principles

After carefully studying child development theory and research[4] in the course of developing the Widely Held Expectations and teaching strategies in this book, the committee developed these guiding principles regarding how children learn and grow. They serve as an excellent guide for using this document.

Each child is unique.

How a child develops results from a combination of factors, such as the characteristics they are born with, the culture they live in, and their experiences within their family and in other settings such as preschool. Even though the Widely Held Expectations describe "standards" for what children should be learning during preschool, the way each child's development unfolds will vary greatly.

Development occurs in predictable patterns.

Even though each child is unique, development typically unfolds in progressive and predictable steps or stages. What varies tremendously from one child to another is when and how children achieve various developmental milestones. These differences are associated with individual temperament, learning characteristics, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family culture, and genetic make-up. Children with disabilities may exhibit even greater variation in the achievement of developmental milestones. The Widely Held Expectations are based on our best knowledge of how children develop, with the understanding that these are broad descriptions and that children will vary.

[4] See Bibliography, *Child Development*

Preschool-age children are active learners.

Children need hands-on learning experiences to develop the skills and knowledge described in the Widely Held Expectations. They learn by doing, and they need time to practice what they are learning, to ask questions, to investigate, and to use what they are learning in their everyday activities.

Many factors influence a child's development.

Children's growth and learning are greatly impacted by their physical environment, relationships with family members and others, and the community and culture in which they live. These factors are different for all children and will shape their view of the world and how they develop.

Children with disabilities learn best in inclusive settings.

Children with disabilities will make progress on the skills and characteristics described in the Widely Held Expectations, although with great variation in how. They will make the most progress developmentally, socially, and academically when appropriate special education services are provided in inclusive settings. Just as the Widely Held Expectations are inclusive of all young learners, so should early childhood programs be. Children with and without disabilities learn from one another in natural environments. A curriculum and classroom tailored to meet the needs of individual children meet the needs of all.[5]

[5] See Bibliography, *Diversity and Inclusion*

Using the Widely Held Expectations

They Should Be Used To ...

- Promote development of the whole child, including physical, emotional-social, language, cognitive development, and learning characteristics
- Provide a common set of expectations for preschool children's development and, at the same time, validate the individual differences that should be expected in children
- Promote shared responsibility for children's early care and education
- Emphasize the importance of play as an instructional strategy that promotes learning in early childhood programs
- Support safe, clean, caring, and effective learning environments for young children
- Support appropriate teaching practices and provide a guide for gauging children's progress
- Encourage and value family and community involvement in promoting children's success
- Reflect and value the diversity that exists among children and families served in early care and education programs across the state

They Should NOT Be Used To ...

- Stand in isolation from what we know and believe about children's development and about quality early education programs
- Serve as an assessment checklist or evaluation tool to make high-stakes decisions about children's program placement or entry into kindergarten
- Limit a child's experiences in preschool or exclude children for any reason
- Set up conflicting expectations and requirements for programs
- Single out or blame anyone – children, educators, parents, or programs – for what may or may not have occurred during a child's preschool years
- Decide that any child has "failed" in any way
- Emphasize child outcomes over program requirements

Diversity in Languages and Cultures

The Widely Held Expectations are a foundation for the instruction of all preschool-age children in North Carolina. Our state is comprised of people representing a wide array of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and the number of families – and preschool children – who do not speak English as their primary language is growing. This diversity is something to celebrate because families from different backgrounds bring a wealth of strengths, knowledge, and values to the preschool classroom.

In the development of this book, the committee carefully considered the types of support that could most benefit young English language learners. Classrooms that include children from diverse cultures and with different home languages should be guided by these six principles.[6]

- Having children from families with diverse cultural and language backgrounds is a valuable asset to preschool programs.
- Children's learning is affected by their language and cultural background.
- Preschool classrooms should strive to promote understanding and respect for different cultures and languages.
- Children whose home language is not English learn best when early educators encourage them to continue to speak their home language while learning English.
- Families who speak a language other than English should be encouraged to continue to speak to their child in their native language, even while the child is learning English.
- As children learn English, they go through predictable stages, much like a baby learning to talk. Educators should expect wide variation in how they make progress on learning English and on the skills and characteristics described in the Widely Held Expectations.

It Takes Everyone Working Together

Early educators play a significant role in supporting children's growth and development, and so do families, program administrators, policymakers, and community members. The involvement of parents, principals, directors, funders, and others interested in the welfare of young children is essential to support children's development.

The Role of Families

Families are the first and most consistent teachers children experience in their lives. Early educators can use the Widely Held Expectations as a common starting point for working with families – to help them understand and support age-appropriate goals for their children that can be shared between home and school. Children will make the most progress when early educators and families work together. Therefore, each of the developmental domains in this book includes strategies specifically written for parents.

6 See Bibliography, *Diversity and Inclusion*

The Contribution of Administrators

Principals and program directors are the instructional leaders of their schools and early childhood programs. They influence the resources available for early childhood education and the attitudes and practices of the persons working directly with children. In their positions, these leaders can have great impact on the implementation and success of the Widely Held Expectations – primarily by clearly communicating their commitment to them and to early education programs; by ensuring that these expectations are understood by teachers and used consistently and appropriately; and by providing professional development relevant to early educators. Children who participate in quality preschool programs have less need for specialized interventions and are less likely to be retained in later grades.[7] Therefore, making early preschool services a high priority makes sense.

The Support of Policymakers and the Community

Policymakers and community leaders can fill a vital role in supporting the development of young children by taking the lead in educating the public about high-quality early education and promoting the use of the Widely Held Expectations. This could take the form of soliciting input on early childhood policies and programs, advocating for funding, and promoting collaboration and cooperation among agencies and organizations that serve young children and their families.

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[7] See Bibliography, *Early Intervention*

Commonly Asked Questions

What ages are included in the Widely Held Expectations?

They apply to all children in North Carolina who are three, four, and five years old and are not yet age-eligible to enter kindergarten. Included are children with and without disabilities, children who speak English and those who are learning English, and children participating in any type of early care and education program. Throughout this book, we refer to these children as "preschool-age."

Who will use the material in this book?

Educators in Title I, Head Start, Even Start, More at Four, Exceptional Children, and Developmental Day classrooms within public schools should use it as a guide for their planning. Copies will also be available to educators in all other early childhood programs across the state, regardless of their location or setting, in the hope that they, too, will find it a helpful resource for planning.

How is this different from standards we already have?

This document outlines expectations for children's growth and development, rather than defining how programs should operate. While program standards establish expectations for program features such as adult:child ratio or group size, here the focus is on what we want children to learn or develop. These expectations are known as "early learning standards," and they define the areas of child growth and development that should be the focus of daily activities.

Is this a curriculum for preschool programs?

No, it is not. The Widely Held Expectations and suggested teaching strategies are intended to provide a lens for looking at curricula and daily activities to see if they address important areas of child development. The expectations define what children should have the opportunity to learn.

N.C. Standard Course of Study for Kindergarten	N.C. Early Learning Standards for Preschool				
	Approaches to Learning	Emotional and Social Development	Health and Physical Development	Language Development and Communication	Cognitive Development
Arts Education	★	★	★	★	★
Computer/Tech. Skills		★		★	★
English Language Arts				★	★
English Language Dev.		★	★	★	★
Guidance	★	★			★
Healthful Living		★	★		
Information Skills	★	★		★	★
Mathematics	★			★	★
Second Languages		★		★	★
Science	★		★	★	★
Social Studies	★	★		★	★

The curriculum and daily activities are how we go about helping them learn in areas described in the Widely Held Expectations. Any number of curricula or types of activities can be used to help children gain the knowledge, skills, and characteristics outlined in these pages.

Is this an assessment tool?

The Widely Held Expectations are neither an assessment tool nor a checklist. They represent the combined thinking of many early childhood educators, researchers, parents, and community members about what children might reasonably be expected to know and be able to do during the preschool years.

Once again, they represent what we want children to progress toward. Early educators will use the expectations to plan their curricula and use assessments to gather information about how children are progressing in relation to the expectations. Assessments can shed light on areas in which individual children need additional support, which in turn helps the educator plan appropriate activities or experiences.

What research base forms the foundation for the Widely Held Expectations?

They are based on what we know about children's growth and development from theory and research. The work of James Hymes and theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Erickson, Gardner, Bandura, and Gurian have provided the field of early education with an extraordinary understanding of how young children develop and learn.[8]

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton's view of child development as a sequence of social and emotional "touchpoints"[9] and the book *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*[10] were particularly important in shaping our view of the importance of emotional-social development. Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory was the basis for the emphasis on children's development being impacted by numerous

[8] See Bibliography, *Child Development*

[9] T.B. Brazelton and J.D. Sparrow, *Touchpoints: 3 to 6* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2001).

[10] National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).

systems, including the classroom, the family, the community, and early childhood policies.[11]

Why are they organized around domains of development?

The five domains identified in this book are included in North Carolina's official definition of school readiness, developed by the Ready for School Goal Team. It is well established that children's development is integrated, or holistic, with progress in one domain influencing development in all of the others. Every child, including those with disabilities, will demonstrate varying degrees of strengths in developmental domains. All five domains are equally important in children's development and for children's success later in school.

How can this material be used to help families of preschoolers?

A question parents often ask is "What should my child be learning?" Early educators can and should use the Widely Held Expectations as a tool to talk with families about what to expect as their children grow and develop and for helping families understand goals for each child. Each domain in this book features simple and effective family strategies that can be shared.

How does the classroom environment support the Widely Held Expectations?

The importance of providing age-appropriate and stimulating environments for children cannot be over-emphasized.[12] Classrooms should be nurturing, comfortable places, rich in materials and experiences that facilitate learning. Though beyond the scope of this book, the North Carolina Public Schools publications *Guide for the Early Years* and *Learning Through the Eyes of a Child* are good resources for creating an ideal learning environment that promotes children's learning and development.

How do these Widely Held Expectations relate to what's expected of children in kindergarten?

The expectations for preschool lay the foundation for what children will be able to learn and do in the next phase of their education. They are aligned with the *North Carolina Kindergarten Standard Course of Study* (as the chart below illustrates) and include abilities and characteristics that pave the way for children to be successful in school and later in life. When adults provide experiences that foster children's development in the areas described in the Widely Held Expectations, they are helping children develop skills and characteristics that will be important in kindergarten and later grades.

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[11] U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
[12] See Bibliography, *Learning Environments*

Active Learning:
A day in the life of a preschool class

Children of preschool age are learning to learn – and they are capable of learning a great deal in an environment that helps them make meaningful connections across all the domains of development. As this story illustrates, growth in language and cognitive skills – not to mention the imprinting of a positive attitude toward learning – occurs quite naturally in the context of social, emotional, and physical growth. This is the story of teachers who know how to put it all together.

Sunlight streams into the windows of the preschool classroom as the children begin arriving on a Monday morning. Ms. Rodriguez, the teacher, greets each of them with a warm smile and asks how they spent their weekend. The children hang up their coats and move confidently into the room, and soon it is filled with a pleasant hum of activity.

Ernie, Jose, and Kortnie return to the block center to finish building the airport they started on Friday. Ernie leads the process with valuable information about the recent airplane trip he took with his family. In the dramatic play area, Maria, Tysheem, and Francesca have set the table and are using the new tortilla press to prepare a make-believe taco lunch for their dolls. Donte and Quincy are curled up in the large overstuffed armchair, "reading" a class photo album that documents their recent field trip to the local farmers' market.

Marcus and Sam don smocks to get ready to paint a picture. Marcus has limited fine-motor skills, so Sam helps him put on a specially designed Velcro mitt that will allow him to successfully manipulate his paintbrush. Ling and Cassie are helping Mr. Smith, the assistant teacher, take care of the class gerbils – putting fresh cedar chips in the cage, filling the water bottle and food dish. When the girls notice that the food container is nearly empty, they rush to the writing center and create a note. It consists of several scribbled lines, which they say is a reminder for Mr. Smith to buy more gerbil food. They each print their initials at the bottom to sign the note.

A few children are working on puzzles and building Lego constructions at tables. Others have noticed the balls of soft clay arranged on a table in the art center, inviting them to roll, pinch, pound, and squeeze.

When someone mentions "wiggly," the teacher suggests they demonstrate what that means. Some of the children flop on the floor and inch across the carpet; others bend their index fingers and inch them across their arms.

Ms. Rodriguez and Mr. Smith seem to be everywhere in the room, yet they never appear rushed. Ms. Rodriguez sits nearby and watches the block construction for a while, then casually asks a few questions that inspire the children to add a control tower to their airport so the planes won't "bump into each other." She comments on the tortillas the children are pretending to make and encourages them to ask Jose what his mother fixes with tortillas at home.

The teacher orders two pretend tacos "to go" and heads on over to the sand table. When the children at the sand table mention they are sifting "flour" for their cakes, she supports their idea, reminding them where the mixing bowls, measuring cups, and spoons are stored on nearby shelves.

Mr. Smith sits with Jeffrey and Salah as they struggle with fitting a puzzle piece into the right spot. Encouraging them not to give up, he models how to turn a puzzle piece around to make it fit. All of the children constantly hear words of encouragement and praise as they work hard in the centers.

A Surprise Arrival

Just as the morning seems well underway, Katie rolls into the room in her wheelchair and calls out, "Come see what I found in my yard!" She's holding a jar with holes poked in the lid. Inside, a fuzzy, black and brown striped caterpillar is munching leaves. Everyone gathers round. "It's a woolly worm," she informs them.

Ms. Rodriguez places the jar on the science table, with a *Field Guide to Moths and Butterflies* next to it. She tells the children, "Let's talk some more about this at circle time. I'll put out the magnifying glasses for those who want to get a better look."

A little later, she notices several children leafing through the book and counting the little caterpillar's stripes. Shonda brings over a clipboard and pen and begins to draw it; Marcus and Sam ask Mr. Smith to help them mix paints that match its colors. Katie finds a piece of furry fabric in the dramatic play area. She holds it for Randy, who has limited vision, to stroke. When she tells him it feels just like her caterpillar, he grins.

At group time, the teacher invites Katie to tell them more about her caterpillar, and she shares an interesting bit of information just learned from her grandfather. "My grandpa says you can tell what kind of winter weather we are going to have by the color of the woolly worm's stripes." The children who made drawings and paintings of the little creature describe the details they included. As they talk, Ms. Rodriguez makes a list of their observations in English and Spanish: brown ("marron"), black ("negro"), and furry ("peludo").

When someone mentions "wiggly," the teacher suggests they demonstrate what that means. Some of the children flop on the floor and inch across the carpet; others bend their index fingers and inch them across their arms. Cayley breaks into song. "The itsy-bitsy woolly worm went up the water spout…" and they all join in, giggling.

The teacher then asks what more they would like to know about woolly worms, and she gets a chorus of questions: "What do they like to eat? Do they need water? Do they need a house to sleep in? Does this one feel lonely with no mom or dad or friends around? What should we name her?"

Ms. Rodriguez lists them all on a chart and as the children get ready to go outdoors, she asks them to think about how they can find the answers.

After the children go home for the day, Ms. Rodriguez and Mr. Smith talk over what had happened that morning and they begin planning ways to build on the children's interest. Mr. Smith prints out an enlarged digital photograph of the woolly worm and displays it on a board in the art area alongside the children's drawings and paintings. Ms. Rodriguez types the children's comments and prints them out in large type to accompany the pictures.

Remembering Katie's observation about the furry fabric, they look through the classroom's collection of recycled material for scraps that might inspire tactile creations. On his way home, Mr. Smith stops at the library to borrow more reference books. Meanwhile, Ms. Rodriguez telephones Katie's grandfather to invite him to the classroom the next day.

Francesca, a quiet child who has not said much all year, arrives the next morning with two additional caterpillars in a jar. She whispers to Mr. Smith that she was worried about Katie's caterpillar being lonely. Several other children bring leaves and twigs collected from their yards, and soon a small group is hard at work assembling a comfortable home for the caterpillar family.

Katie's grandfather, suitably attired in his farmer's overalls, joins the group for circle time and regales them with tales he heard from his own grandfather. The children ask a lot of questions about "the olden days," and again Ms. Rodriguez records them on a chart to be revisited another day. She reminds the children that Mr. Smith will be in the writing center today to help them if they want to send thank-you notes to Katie's grandpa or to the families who helped provide the caterpillars and supplies for their habitat.

Teachable Moments

The two teachers have worked as a team to design a classroom appropriate for the young children who come here each weekday. It is an environment that is nurturing, inviting, and stimulating; one in which children feel welcome and important. The room is arranged so that the children know what to do, where to find the things they need, and how to interact with each other throughout the day.

Activities are planned based on the interests and needs of the children. Learning is fun, engaging, and meaningful, and the curriculum and daily plans are flexible enough to embrace those "teachable moments."

Ms. Rodriguez uses experiences the children have outside the classroom to teach concepts and skills that are necessary for success in school. Her strategy is in alignment with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which noted in 1997: "If learning is relevant for children they are more likely to persist with a task and to be motivated to learn more." She also recognizes that children need to be active learners. As a result, they are encouraged to move more than sit still, and to talk and ask questions. They are actively engaged in the learning process and are encouraged to make meaningful choices. They have enough uninterrupted time to become involved, investigate, select, and persist at activities – and to work at their own pace.

Both of these teachers are intentional in their interactions with the children. They ask questions to stimulate thinking and learning in each child, and they provide numerous opportunities to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping, negotiating, and talking.

The children use writing for meaningful purposes and "read" books that are relevant to their lives. They are encouraged to express themselves through art and music. They use their knowledge of numbers as they interact with each other and their environment.

In this preschool environment, concepts and skills are integrated throughout the five domains: Approaches to Learning, Emotional and Social Development, Health and Physical Development, Cognitive Development, and Language Development and Communication. The children are actively and happily developing their own approaches to learning, self-concepts, motor skills, and cognitive and language abilities with the guidance and support of two caring and competent adults.

Approaches to Learning

- **Pondering, Processing, and Applying Experiences**
- **Curiosity, Information-Seeking, and Eagerness**
- **Risk-Taking, Problem-Solving, and Flexibility**
- **Persistence, Attentiveness, and Responsibility**
- **Imagination, Creativity, and Invention**
- **Aesthetic Sensibility**

If I can ask my own questions, try out my ideas, experience what's around me, share what I find;

If I have plenty of time for my special pace, a nourishing space, things to transform;

If you'll be my patient friend, trusted guide, fellow investigator, partner in learning;

Then I will explore the world, discover my voice, and tell you what I know in a hundred languages.

Pamela Houk

The Approaches to Learning domain includes children's attitudes toward, and interest in, learning. These are manifested in all domains and curriculum areas, including music, dramatic play, and art.

Children of preschool age are beginning to be curious and confident in their ability to learn and enjoy exploration and discovery through play. They enjoy learning and demonstrate some personal areas of interest as well as strategies for finding out more about those interests. They typically are starting to express creativity and imagination through a variety of avenues, and they take initiative when appropriate and show pride in their accomplishments. Moreover, they are demonstrating an increased ability to attend to and persist with tasks even after encountering obstacles.

Approaches to learning permeate every aspect of a child's educational experience. These characteristics and dispositions are the foundation of all future learning and are manifested differently from child to child. It is the responsibility of each teacher to nurture the uniqueness of every child.

Engagement: *A Lesson from Life*

The diamond ring on Ms. Johnson's finger fascinated her class and sparked a long conversation about weddings. Thinking about it later, the teacher realized the children had a wealth of information about weddings to share with one another, and she asked whether they would like to have a "wedding" at school. Soon committees were busy drawing ideas for outfits and cakes, composing invitations, collecting recordings of wedding music, and practicing a special march: "step, stop; step, stop." Preparing a multi-layered cake took many days. Meanwhile, children planned the transformation of their classroom, pacing off the length of a construction-paper carpet. The "brides" and "grooms" arrived for the big day attired in their favorite fancy or fanciful outfits. Some wore princess dresses. One child wore a tinfoil "robot" costume his grandmother helped him make. Family members enjoyed the gala from tiny chairs arranged in rows, and everyone celebrated afterward with cake, juice, and dancing.

Pondering, Processing, and Applying Experiences

This aspect includes forming ideas, reflecting on past events, posing theories about the future, and acting on knowledge of the real world.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Draw on everyday experiences and apply that knowledge to other situations.
- Seek information for further understanding.
- Generate ideas and suggestions and make predictions.
- Describe or act out a memory of a situation or action.
- Form hypotheses about cause and effect.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Allow ample amounts of time for activities involving individual choice and shorter periods for large-group activities.
- Provide time for sharing experiences that involve more than one child or adult.
- Give children time to plan what they are going to do that day and provide time later for them to think and talk about what they did.
- Provide children with the means to represent their ideas in more than one medium (e.g., painting, drawing, blocks).
- Furnish materials that will facilitate the re-creation of memories or experiences that a child can share.
- Supply materials that encourage a spirit of inquiry.
- Encourage children to ask questions of one another and share/compare ideas.
- Listen and respond to exchanges of children's words and thoughts (e.g., open up a discussion of what happened in a class meeting).
- Set an example by thinking out loud.
- Discuss the sequencing and timing of experiences.
- Promote decision-making.

Strategies for Families

- Create time at home every day to talk with your children. Use meal times to talk about your day and ask about theirs. Talk about what you did yesterday and what you will do tomorrow.
- Pay attention as your child talks about her experiences and ask follow-up questions that will encourage her to think and reflect, such as "How did you feel about that?" or "Why do you think that happened?" or "What else might happen?"
- Talk about the books, videos, and television programs your family enjoys.
- Provide time for unscheduled activities that allow your child to explore the world on his own and to generate ideas.

Curiosity, Information-Seeking, and Eagerness

This aspect includes expressing interest in the world, asking questions to find answers, and experimenting with materials.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Use multiple strategies and all available senses to explore the environment.
- Choose to participate in an increasing variety of experiences.
- Demonstrate an eagerness and interest in learning through verbal and nonverbal means while playing, listening, questioning, and interacting.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Offer choices.
- Make materials available that can be used or combined in a variety of ways.
- Provide items for use in dramatic play that authentically reflect life (e.g., a real firefighter's hat, a real doctor's stethoscope, or an authentic kimono).
- Stock the classroom with materials that appeal to both genders and a full range of learning characteristics, cultures, and ability levels of children. Schedule large uninterrupted blocks of time every day for children to use these materials.
- Listen to children and build on their individual ideas and concepts.
- Set an example by sharing children's excitement in discovery and exploration on their level (e.g., digging through snow in winter to see if the grass is still there; looking for flower buds in spring and yellowing leaves in fall).
- Use open-ended and leading questions to explore different interests or to elicit suggestions (e.g., "How can you make the car go faster?" or "How does the water make the wheel turn at the water table?").

Strategies for Families

- Allow your child to play with pots and pans, cups, mixing spoons, and plastic containers.
- Provide supervised experiences with everyday items that can be manipulated (such as nuts and bolts) or taken apart (such as an old electric mixer with the cord removed).
- Let children help with household chores such as cooking, folding laundry, and washing dishes and talk about what you are doing.
- Plan family outings to interesting places, such as parks, museums, national monuments, and science centers.
- Include your child in daily errands, such as trips to the grocery store, bank, or post office.
- Spend time outside exploring nature.
- Make time to join your child in playful activities.
- Share your cultural traditions.
- Ask questions and encourage children to do likewise.

Risk-Taking, Problem-Solving, and Flexibility

This aspect includes independent thinking, recognizing problems and trying to solve them in a variety of ways, and a willingness to try new things and collaborate with others.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Demonstrate a willingness to choose a variety of both familiar and new experiences.
- Demonstrate the ability to tell the difference between appropriate and inappropriate (or dangerous) risk-taking.
- Attempt a variety of strategies to solve problems.
- Demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges.

Strategies for Families

- Recognize "mistakes" as opportunities to learn. (For example: If a teddy bear is left out in the rain, ask "How can we fix it?" or "What can we do so this won't happen again?" Express confidence that your child will make a better choice the next time.)
- Take your own mistakes in stride.
- Let children know that their thinking is valued as much as – or even more than – getting the "right" answer. Encourage them to share their thinking with you.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Set up clearly defined interest areas where children can work with a variety of interesting building materials and other items, focus on what they are doing, and have their work protected from accidental destruction by others.
- Furnish an abundant supply of thought-provoking, complex materials that can be used in more than one way (e.g., blocks or clay) and are not limited to a single "right" answer.
- Provide challenging, high-quality tools and equipment.
- Establish a predictable, yet flexible, routine.
- Show genuine care, affection, and kindness toward children (e.g., validate their disappointment when a block structure falls down; encourage them to figure out what happened and rebuild).
- Recognize that "mistakes" are inevitable and treat them as opportunities to learn.
- Set an example by acknowledging one's own "mistakes" and modeling constructive reactions to them.
- Help children think and talk through different approaches to problems (e.g., when their favorite game isn't available, encourage them to consider another choice).
- Encourage children to share, listen, and ask questions of one another and compare strategies and solutions.
- Promote collaboration to achieve common goals.
- Model flexibility.

Persistence, Attentiveness, and Responsibility

This aspect refers to the ability to sustain attention, pursue difficult tasks, cope successfully with trying situations, and take responsibility for one's own learning.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Demonstrate the ability to remain engaged in an experience.
- Work toward completion of a task despite distractions or interruptions.
- Seek and accept help or information when needed.
- Develop a sense of purpose and the ability to follow through.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Furnish the classroom with a variety of materials that allow children with diverse interests and abilities to experience success.
- Organize the space in a way that protects children who want to work meaningfully for extended periods of time.
- Provide resources that allow children to carry explorations to a deeper level of meaning and understanding.
- Be flexible in allowing children to use materials in a creative and integrated way.
- Establish procedures, routines, and rules to instill responsibility.
- Plan projects that are completed over the course of several days.
- Structure the day so transitions and distractions are minimized.
- Recognize and plan for children's differences and their diverse ways of learning.
- Watch for and acknowledge increasing complexity in a child's play (e.g., "Your tower of blocks became a fire station and now you've built a whole town").
- Allow children to share ownership of the classroom by participating in discussions related to classroom decisions and helping to establish rules and routines.
- Offer assistance only after determining a child's need and intent.
- Ask probing questions when children reach a state of confusion, to bring them to a greater understanding.
- Celebrate perseverance as well as the completed project (e.g., make comments like "You're the kind of person who doesn't give up").
- Provide real-life and purposeful experiences (e.g., "How many graham crackers will we need for your table at snack time?").
- Show that you value children's thinking processes by acknowledging their work and effort (e.g., "Look how long and hard you worked on this").
- Encourage children to listen carefully to what others in the class are saying and ask questions.

Strategies for Families

- Allow your child to play and learn skills at a pace that is comfortable and be supportive of his efforts. Build enough time into the morning schedule to allow him to dress himself, even though you could do it in less time.
- Organize toys, books, and puzzles so children can access them and not be distracted by clutter. Provide shelves, baskets, or other containers so they can sort their toys and put their space in order.
- Rotate toys so your child can make full use of them and not be overwhelmed.
- Give your child chores and break them down into manageable steps. Work together and offer choices. (For example, say "Which would you like to do first – pick up your blocks or pick up your clothes?").
- Involve children in planning family activities, such as vacations or trips to museums, festivals, parks, and the library.

Imagination, Creativity, and Invention

This aspect includes originality, playfulness, and having multiple interests.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Take on pretend roles in play and make-believe with objects.
- Approach tasks and experiences with increasing flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness.
- Use or combine materials/strategies in novel ways while exploring and solving problems.
- Think more openly and creatively by comparing and contrasting solution strategies.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide children with adequate time to fully explore materials.
- Set up well-organized, clearly defined interest areas abundantly stocked with thought-provoking materials.
- Provide open-ended materials that can be used in more than one way and are not limited to one "right" answer.
- Illustrate and model how different kinds of media and materials can be used together.
- Provide materials reflective of diverse cultures, abilities, and family structures.
- Introduce materials and explore a range of ways to use them.
- Invite children to think of other ways to use the materials.
- Provide experiences in which the goal is to try many different approaches rather than finding one "right" solution.
- Foster cooperative learning groups.
- Promote the integrated use of materials throughout activities and centers (e.g., say "Let's get some paper

from the writing center to make signs for the city you made in the block center").

- Challenge children to consider alternative ideas and endings of stories.
- Help children accommodate and build on one another's ideas to achieve common goals (e.g., suggest that individual block structures can be put together to make a much larger one).

Strategies for Families

- Enjoy reading a variety of books with your child.
- Allow children to solve problems in their own way.
- Show appreciation and enthusiasm for children's efforts. Ask them to talk about what they did and what happened.
- Encourage pretend play. Put a blanket over the dining room table to make a "cave."
- Engage children in making up games, jokes, songs, and stories.

Aesthetic Sensibility

This aspect includes appreciation and enjoyment of culture and beauty in its many forms, including music, art, humor, dance, drama, nature, and photography.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Appreciate and use humor.
- Demonstrate a sense of wonder and pleasure.
- Take delight in beauty.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Use soft surfaces, light colors, and comfortable furniture to create a warm, inviting classroom atmosphere.
- Provide materials children can manipulate, explore with their senses, and use in different ways.
- Display children's artwork on a rotating basis, along with other items of beauty (e.g., wall hangings, tapestry, weavings, posters, stained glass, or arrangements of flowers and leaves).
- Acquaint children with the many different kinds of music and musical instruments.
- Provide occasions for children to move, dance, and pretend. Let them choose which costumes, materials, and artifacts to use.
- Invite professional artists, musicians, dancers, and craftspeople representing different cultures and languages to visit the classroom.
- Visit local museums, art exhibits, dance recitals, theater productions, poetry readings, concerts, or other arts venues.
- Borrow library prints of great artwork representing a variety of countries and ethnic groups, hang them at the eye level of the children, and have conversations about them.
- Put illustrated coffee-table books in the classroom's book area.
- Set an example by demonstrating spontaneity, a sense of wonder, and excitement.
- Use reflective dialogue when talking with children about what they have experienced.
- Laugh with children and show that you enjoy sharing their sense of humor.
- Provide opportunities for sharing authentic cultural traditions.
- Invite parents to share their artistic and musical gifts with the class.

Strategies for Families

- Point out and share in your child's wonder of nature, such as a cloud formation, ripples in a pond, or dew on a flower.
- Find time every day to have fun with your child.
- Discuss what you are seeing and enjoying during walks and drives, such as a beautiful building, flowers and trees in bloom, or sweet smells.
- Provide opportunities for your child to experience a variety of authentic cultural activities, such as attending an international festival.
- Share jokes, funny anecdotes, and riddles.
- Take your child to local museums, cultural exhibits, and musical events.
- Tell your children stories about your own childhood.

Emotional and Social Development

- **Developing a Sense of Self**
- **Developing a Sense of Self with Others**

"Peer relations contribute substantially to both social and cognitive development and to the effectiveness with which we function as adults. Indeed, the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not school grades and not classroom behavior but, rather, the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children."

Willard W. Hartup

The Emotional and Social Development domain involves children's feelings about themselves and their relationships with others. Development in this domain is influenced by a child's temperament, cultural expectations, and early experiences. Emotional support and secure relationships foster the child's self-confidence and self-esteem. Particularly important in this domain are the skills children demonstrate while making friends, appreciating differences, solving conflicts, and functioning effectively in groups. These characteristics form the foundation for learning and the relationships that give meaning to life. Positive relationships are essential to a child's emotional development and later academic success.

Preschool children are beginning to demonstrate the emotional well-being and social skills needed to interact well and to form and keep relationships with adults and peers. They are beginning to express their own feelings appropriately and seek help when needed.

Children of this age group are beginning to demonstrate some degree of independence and follow basic rules and routines. They work and play alone at times, as well as participate in group activities and work or play cooperatively with other children.

Identity: *Exploring the Possibilities*

Josh and Javita were working on a block construction, but every time they tried to place large blocks on top of smaller ones, the stack teetered and fell down. Josh finally pushed all the blocks off the table in frustration. Their teacher had been observing and went over to talk with them. "I've noticed that the blocks keep falling down, and I can tell this makes you angry," she said thoughtfully. "I wonder why this keeps happening? Maybe there is a different block that can go on the bottom." Javita chose the largest block and began stacking again; Josh joined in, and soon they had succeeded in building a tall tower. The teacher proceeded to help them make a "SAVE" sign to protect their work and then snapped a photo of them with their construction. Copies of the picture went into the children's portfolios, documenting their growing ability to work together cooperatively and manage frustrations.

Developing a Sense of Self

Emotional and social development refers to children's feelings about themselves and their relationships with others. These areas of development are influenced by maturation, temperament, cultural expectations, and experiences.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Show self-confidence as they develop abilities and potential.
- Demonstrate persistence with challenging activities, showing a can-do attitude.

- Demonstrate increasing self-direction and independence, especially with regard to self-help skills and separating from primary caregivers.
- Demonstrate increasing competence in regulating, recognizing, and expressing emotions verbally and nonverbally.
- Enjoy playing alone or near other children.
- Develop skills for coping with adversity and change.
- Express and manage anger appropriately.
- Develop an awareness of personal uniqueness, regarding themselves as having certain abilities, characteristics, preferences, and cultural identities.
- Recognize that they are members of different groups (e.g., family, preschool class, ethnic group).
- Use pretend play to express thoughts and feelings.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Help establish a sense of trust and security by developing warm and responsive relationships with every child. Greet each of them by name daily. Through smiles or friendly gestures, show you are pleased to see them.
- Respect individual temperaments and personal uniqueness and be aware of any personal circumstances in a child's life.
- Encourage children to express their feelings through appropriate words and actions.
- Communicate often with children, both individually and in small groups. Listen to what they are saying and show you value their opinions by acknowledging them and building on their ideas.
- Involve children in planning related to the classroom (e.g., ask for and use their ideas about visual displays, book selections, and activities).
- If possible, use children's home language in daily conversations with them.
- Help children identify themselves as unique individuals and as members of different groups (e.g., create and display family photo books; ask the children to describe something that is special about another child; put a full-length mirror in the classroom; use given names and pronounce them correctly).
- Design the classroom in a way that stimulates and challenges children and gives them choices that are appropriate for a range of ages, developmental stages, and abilities (e.g., freshen materials in activity centers to reflect emerging themes generated by children and children's interests).
- Support the growth of children's feelings of competence and self-confidence (e.g., use books and games they create; provide access to materials that encourage them to stretch their abilities; provide positive comments about their accomplishments).
- Allow children to experiment without fear of criticism or danger. Treat mishaps such as spilling, dropping, or knocking over objects as opportunities for positive learning.
- Make the classroom environment safe, pleasant, and joyful. Promote the use of humor and singing.
- Make room in the classroom for cozy, safe areas where children can be alone if they wish.
- Get to know children's families and value them as partners. Invite their participation and input through comment cards, home visits, and casual conversation – especially when things are going well.

Strategies for Families

- Provide your child with a dependable, warm, and loving relationship.
- Listen to your children and observe them. Know what they are interested in and build on that with activities you can share.
- Involve your child in planning activities such as meals, celebrations, and outings.
- Nurture a child's natural curiosity and encourage the trying of new things by sharing the world and celebrating it together.
- Help your child identify and understand the emotions she feels.
- Set a good example through the way you address intense feelings such as fear, anger, jealousy, sadness, and excitement and in the way you handle conflict.
- Help children see the natural consequences of their actions in a positive way – such as helping them put away their toys while explaining that this will make it easier to find them the next time.
- View all experiences, both positive and negative, as opportunities for further exploration and learning.
- Raise children's awareness of their cultural heritage and their pride in it.
- Understand what can realistically be expected of children in general and your child in particular.

Developing a Sense of Self with Others

Critical conditions of emotional and social development include emotional support and secure relationships that foster a child's self-confidence and self-esteem. A child who is securely attached to family and culture develops a healthy sense of identity.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Approach others easily with expectations of positive interactions.
- Seek out others when needing emotional support, physical assistance, social interaction, problem-solving, and approval.
- Develop awareness of personal behavior and its effect on others.
- Balance their own needs with those of others in the group.
- Work to resolve conflicts positively.
- Play and interact cooperatively with other children (e.g., taking turns, exchanging ideas).
- Show interest in and respond to other points of view.
- Respond to others' feelings, including showing empathy.
- Develop the ability to distinguish between unintentional and intentional actions.
- Show ease and comfort in their interactions with familiar children and adults.
- Form and maintain positive relationships, including friendships with children and adults.
- Recognize, respect, and accept similarities and differences among people, including people with disabilities and those from varying cultures.
- Follow social rules, transitions, and routines that have been explained to them.
- Recognize the classroom as a caring community in which members take care of property, respect the rights of others, and keep one another safe.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Create opportunities for children to interact with others who have varying characteristics and abilities, identifying and pointing out areas in which they share a common interest.
- Observe children in the classroom and facilitate their entry into social groups with their peers.
- Promote respect and appreciation for each child's culture and the cultures of others (e.g., develop a family photo wall and talk about each family, including people of various cultures, ages, and abilities).
- Invite families to visit the classroom and share their cultural experiences.
- Alert children to the feelings and emotional needs of others (e.g., display and talk about pictures depicting various emotions; point out how children feel in various real-life situations).
- Help children see the effect of their behavior on others by encouraging them to see things through other perspectives and share their ideas about solving problems and social conflicts (e.g., facilitate the process of conflict resolution).
- Protect children's right to express emotions. Allow them to be sad or angry and validate those feelings by naming them and talking about them. Encourage them to ask for help when needed.
- Ask for children's ideas in establishing classroom rules and limits. Establish, model, and explain simple rules in terms they can understand.
- Be aware of social interactions among children and create opportunities to support friendships.
- Make the classroom the children's space, with displays of their creations, experiences, interests, and cultures.
- Create many inviting areas of the room where small groups of children can play.
- Model asking for and understanding the viewpoints and opinions of others.
- Promote an atmosphere of cooperation instead of competition (e.g., introduce activities that require two or three children to work together).
- Provide opportunities for children to be responsible members of the classroom community, respecting shared rights and property and helping others (e.g., assign individual cubbies for belongings; rotate responsibility for tending classroom plants).
- Maintain an ongoing flow of information between school and family, through home-school journals or cassette tapes, suggestion boxes, weekly newsletters, phone calls, or classroom visits.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage and reinforce caring behavior in your child by outwardly showing affection to members of your family.
- Share your feelings and emotions.
- Create opportunities for positive interactions and friendships in a variety of settings (such as participating in neighborhood potlucks or impromptu ball games).
- Encourage children to ask for assistance when needed, being aware of their emerging skills.
- Establish, explain, and model simple rules (a bedtime routine, for example) in terms your child can understand.
- Promote respect and appreciation for your own culture and for the cultures and abilities of others. Establish traditions such as sharing family stories and celebrating special events or occasions.

Health and Physical Development

- **Self-Care**
- **Safety Awareness**
- **Motor Skills**
- **Physical Health and Growth**

"Since researchers are becoming increasingly concerned about the low level of fitness in all children … it is imperative that early childhood programs offer a regular movement program. I have found that young children are fascinated with their bodies. They enjoy activities that explore the use of muscles (including the heart) and the different ways we can make our bodies strong and healthy (e.g., stretching, jogging, climbing, skating, swimming, and dancing). Providing lots of opportunity for locomotor activity on a regular basis contributes to children's fitness level."

Gisela Loeffler

The domain of Health and Physical Development encompasses opportunities for children to begin developing and refining motor skills, self-care, physical health and growth, and safety awareness. These opportunities are provided in safe and accessible environments that respect cultural and individual differences.

During the preschool years, children begin to practice new motor skills such as balance, coordination, strength, and the ability to grasp writing tools. They also begin demonstrating self-help skills such as dressing themselves.

Children 3 to 5 years old need to be able to see and hear well; vision and hearing problems must be corrected to the greatest extent possible and adaptations made as needed. Likewise, children should have healthy teeth or have their dental problems treated. They need to have immunizations on schedule to prevent diseases, and they need to be assured that any health problems are detected and treated as early as possible. Children also need proper nutrition and rest, in order to have the energy and mobility to explore their environment and increase their ability to concentrate. In addition, early identification and intervention are critical for children with disabilities.

Well-Being: *Getting in the Game*

The children were enjoying their daily outdoor play period. Jordan and Sarah put on helmets and headed for the tricycles in the bike area. Latasha, Ashley, and Devon worked on puzzles at the picnic table. Patrick and Melia painted on the sidewalk with water. In the designated open area, a small group of children and a parent volunteer bounced a large playground ball. Molly, a child with a visual impairment, sat alone nearby, and her teacher joined her. While they were talking, the ball bounced over to them. "Your mom tells me you really like to play ball at home," the teacher said. "Would you like to play today?" She flicked a switch on the ball that made it beep. Molly replied with a smile, "Yeah, I do want to play!" Taking hold of the girl's hand, the teacher stood up and said, "Let's go!"

Self-Care

Self-care refers to the development and use of eating, dressing, and hygiene skills, and other indications such as taking responsibility for possessions.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Develop an awareness of hygiene.
- Follow basic hygiene practices (e.g., brushing teeth, washing hands).
- Increase independence with basic self-help skills (e.g., feeding oneself, toileting, dressing oneself).
- Develop the ability to care for personal belongings.
- Help with routine care of the environment (e.g., put toys away).

Strategies for Families

- Demonstrate and talk with your child about hygienic practices such as hand-washing, bathing, and proper dental care.
- Provide opportunities for your child to practice self-care skills as independently as possible, honoring your own cultural framework. Examples include asking for help when appropriate, feeding oneself, dressing, washing hands, toileting, and locating personal items.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Teach and model hygienic practices (e.g., washing hands, covering mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, and dental care).
- Use interesting and entertaining ways to practice personal care and self-help skills (e.g., add baby doll outfits and clothing with fasteners to the dramatic play center).
- Provide instruction and facilitate ample opportunities for children to practice self-care skills as independently as they are able (e.g., verbally or nonverbally asking for help, feeding themselves, dressing, washing hands, toileting, and locating personal items).
- Maintain environments that support self-care and hygiene (child-size sink, toilet, coat rack, toothbrushes, etc.).
- Encourage children to show independence in self-care practices. Provide time, support, and equipment as needed.

Safety Awareness

Safety awareness refers to development of the ability to identify potential risks and use safe practices to protect oneself and others.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of personal safety.
- Develop awareness of and the ability to follow basic health and safety rules (e.g., fire and traffic safety).
- Trust and cooperate in a comfortable, safe environment.
- Recognize and avoid potentially harmful persons, objects, substances, activities, and environments.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide a safe, healthy, supportive environment with appropriate supervision.
- Teach safety rules and model safe practices (e.g., bus safety, playground safety, staying with the group, safe use of classroom materials, and knowing personal identification information).
- Teach and model appropriate responses to potentially dangerous situations, including fire, violent weather, and strangers or other individuals who may cause harm.
- Provide and monitor appropriate media content. Eliminate access to violent and inappropriate programming, video games, and movies.
- Report all suspected child abuse or neglect.

Strategies for Families

- Provide a safe, healthy, supportive environment for your children, with appropriate supervision.
- Talk about safe practices and model them yourself, such as looking both ways before crossing streets and wearing a helmet when bicycling. Use seatbelts and child-restraint seats. Make sure children know their full name and other personal identification information.
- Discuss with your child appropriate responses to potentially dangerous situations, such as inappropriate touching. Teach them fire safety rules and how to use 911 to summon help.
- Monitor what your child sees on television and at the movie theater and eliminate access to violent and inappropriate shows, video games, and films.

Motor Skills

Fine motor refers to movement of the small muscles of the hand and arm that control the ability to scribble, write, draw, tie shoes, use a keyboard, and many other activities requiring finger, hand, and hand-eye coordination. Gross motor refers to movement of the large muscles in the upper and lower body that control the ability to walk, run, dance, jump, and other skills relating to body strength and stamina.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Develop small muscle control and coordination.
- Experiment with handheld tools that develop strength, control, and dexterity of small muscles (e.g., spoons, paintbrushes, crayons, markers, safety scissors, and a variety of technological tools, with adaptations as needed).
- Explore and engage in activities that enhance hand-eye coordination, such as using eating utensils, dressing themselves, building with blocks, creating with clay or play dough, putting puzzles together, stringing beads, and using other manipulatives.
- Develop body strength, balance, flexibility, and stamina.
- Develop large muscle control and coordinate movements in their upper and/or lower body.
- Explore a variety of equipment and activities that enhance gross motor development (e.g., balls, slides, locomotive toys, and assistive technology).
- Increase the ability to move their bodies in space (running, jumping, skipping).

Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide daily opportunities and a variety of activities for children to use handheld tools and objects.
- Model the use of drawing and writing tools in daily activities.
- Plan activities that use a variety of materials to support fine motor skill development, with adaptations as needed (paper, pencils, crayons, safety scissors, play dough, manipulatives, blocks, etc.).
- Provide child-size tables and chairs.
- Supervise and encourage appropriate use of materials to foster greater success and enjoyment.
- Encourage children to take part in active play every day, such as climbing, running, hopping, rhythmic movement, dance, and movement to music and games.
- Supervise and participate in daily outdoor play. Provide adequate space and age-appropriate equipment and materials, with adaptations as needed.
- Plan daily physical activities that are vigorous as well as developmentally and individually appropriate.

Strategies for Families

- Provide your child with a variety of tools and objects that small hands can hold, manipulate and use – such as silverware, toothbrush, comb, or hairbrush.
- Show your child how you use drawing and writing tools in your daily activities (for example, creating a grocery list, jotting down a telephone number, addressing an envelope, or using the computer to write a letter).
- Keep a ready supply of simple materials such as paper, pencils, crayons, play dough, and blocks available in a place where your child can work with them for extended periods of time.
- Make physical activity a big part of your child's daily life – running, hopping, dancing, playing games, and moving rhythmically.
- Supervise and take part in frequent periods of outdoor play and forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness.

Physical Health and Growth

Physical health and growth focuses on dietary habits and nutrition awareness, the development of healthy exercise habits, and attention to other wellness issues.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Participate in a variety of physical activities for longer periods of time (e.g., exercise, games, and active play).
- Transition from high-energy to low-energy activities (e.g., calming or other relaxing activities).
- Recognize and eat nutritious foods.
- Develop an awareness of personal health and fitness.
- Participate in games, outdoor play, and other forms of exercise to enhance physical fitness.
- Engage in adaptive physical activities as appropriate.
- Make better use of their vision and hearing, and benefit from correction and aids as needed.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide time for frequent exercise and active play by limiting the use of television and videos in the classroom.

- Encourage and support children's need for rest and relaxation by scheduling both active and quiet times.
- Model and discuss healthy eating habits and provide nutritious snacks and meals.
- Talk with families about health concerns that may be affecting a child's development (e.g., growth, hearing, vision, and appropriate clothing for weather conditions).
- Help families identify and use local health, medical, and dental resources for routine checkups and treatment of illness.
- Increase opportunities, supervise and actively participate in children's outdoor play.
- Play visual and auditory discrimination games such as "I spy" and take listening walks.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage exercise and active play and limit the time your child spends watching television, playing video games, and using the computer.
- Establish routines for bedtime and quiet time.
- Set an example with healthy eating habits and make sure your child has adequate nutrition.
- Identify and use local health, medical, and dental resources for routine medical and dental checkups and treatment of illness.
- Make sure children are properly dressed for weather conditions and activities.
- Increase outdoor play and provide appropriate supervision.

Language Development and Communication

- **Receptive Language**
- **Expressive Language**
- **Foundations for Reading**
- **Foundations for Writing**

"The basic need to communicate coupled with a rich and stimulating language environment seem to be the main factors that propel children's early language learning. Parents, grandparents, and early education caregivers need to know that child language development begins in infancy and is an ongoing process in which young children expand and refine their knowledge and use of language largely with the help of facilitating adults."

Dorothy S. Strickland

From birth, children are learning language. As families and other caregivers talk, sing, laugh, read, and interact with children, they are providing a strong beginning for them to become successful readers and writers. Children of preschool age are beginning to develop many language competencies, using language as a tool to communicate their needs, interact socially with others, and describe events, thoughts, and feelings.

Research increasingly demonstrates that children who are provided environments filled with print, books, and conversations with supportive adults acquire knowledge and skills that greatly facilitate their success when they begin to receive formal instruction.

In North Carolina, an increasing number of children entering school come from families who speak a language other than English. The competencies addressed in this domain can be developed in any language and, for most children, will be developed first in their primary language. Strengthening language and communication competencies in children's native languages helps prepare them for the additional task of learning English.

Dialogue: *The Wide World of Words*

Taking advantage of the bilingualism of his classroom families, the teacher read "The Three Little Pigs" aloud in English and then had Maria's mother read the story in Spanish. Afterward, the children acted out the story, using puppets, sticks, straw, and pretend bricks, and the teacher pointed out that the props would be available in the dramatic play center along with audiotapes of the story in the two languages. During center time, Jesús put a wolf puppet on his hand and approached Alice, saying: "Huff, puff, blow down!" Alice pointed to "No!" on her augmentative communication board. Jesús then turned to Johnny and repeated his command. Johnny declared, "Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin!" After observing the children's play for a period of time, the teacher made a note in his anecdotal records that the three children could repeat parts of a story using new language and vocabulary with enthusiasm.

Receptive Language

Receptive language traditionally refers to a listening vocabulary, knowledge of spoken words, and understanding connected speech. Here it also refers to understanding non-verbal language such as signs, gestures, and picture symbols, and includes expectations that reflect the needs of children using non-verbal communication.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Understand increasingly complex sentences, including past, present, and future tenses.
- Understand and use a growing vocabulary.
- Attend to language for longer periods of time, such as when books are read, people are telling stories, and during conversations.
- Consistently respond to requests for information or action (e.g., respond to questions and follow one- and two-step directions).
- Comprehend and use language for multiple social and cognitive purposes (e.g., understand and talk about feelings, ideas, information, and beliefs).
- Develop familiarity with sounds in words (e.g., listening to, identifying, recognizing, and discriminating).
- Understand that people communicate in many ways, including through gestures, sign language, facial expressions, and augmentative communication devices.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Use facial expressions, gestures, and a rich and varied vocabulary when speaking and reading with children.
- Introduce new words and concepts by labeling what children are doing and experiencing while providing opportunities for conversations.
- Give children clear instructions that help them move from simple directions to a more complex sequence. State directions positively, respectfully, carefully, and only as needed.
- Use gestures and props to help children understand and respond to verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Provide opportunities throughout the day for children to talk, share, and discuss stories and interact with each other and with adults.
- Engage children in one-on-one conversations; listen and respond to what they are saying.
- Tell stories and read aloud to children, repeating their favorite books. Vary the tone and pitch of your

voice while reading to emphasize different characters, moods, or other qualities in a story.

- Help children discriminate sounds in spoken language through rhymes, songs, and word games, using various media (e.g., CDs and tapes of music and stories).
- Offer different types of music rhythms, patterns, and tempos and have the children imitate these by clapping or playing musical instruments.
- Model and provide opportunities for children to communicate in different ways (e.g., home languages and also manual signs, gestures, and devices).

Strategies for Families

- Talk with your children. Engaging in conversations whenever and wherever you are together helps them understand increasingly complex language and words.
- Assign simple tasks. Engaging children in small jobs helps them learn to follow directions. Directions should be clear and positive and kept to a minimum.
- Be expressive. Use gestures and props to help your child understand and respond to verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Be a good listener. Notice and respond to what children say and do. Ask questions and pause to give them time to think and respond.
- Protect your child's hearing through routine health examinations and prompt medical attention to suspected ear infections.
- Have fun with words. Singing songs and playing rhyming and word games (nursery rhymes, poems, finger plays) help children develop an understanding of different sounds.
- Help children understand and appreciate that communication occurs in many ways, through languages that are different from your own and also through manual signs, gestures, and devices.
- Talk, sing, and play with your children using your home language – the language you know best.

Expressive Language

Expressive language includes speaking and other means of communication such as sign language and use of communication devices.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Use verbal and non-verbal language (gestures, devices, signs, and picture symbols) to communicate for multiple purposes (e.g., to express wants, needs, ideas, feelings, and to relate personal information and experiences).
- Use language as a part of pretend play to create and enact roles.
- Use language to establish and maintain relationships.
- Initiate and engage in conversations.
- Describe experiences and create and/or retell simple stories.
- Ask questions and make comments related to the topic of discussion.
- Communicate messages with expression, tone, and inflection appropriate to the situation.
- Use increasingly complex and varied language structures, sentences, and vocabulary.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Create an environment of trust and support in which children feel free to express themselves.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in dialogue, through frequent one-to-one conversations, small group interactions with adults, and with other children.
- Encourage children to describe their family, home, community, and classroom.
- Pause when reading and talking so children can ask questions and propose answers.
- Help children remain focused on the main topic of conversation by redirecting and restating current ideas.
- Encourage creative attempts at putting words and sentences together to use language for a variety of purposes.
- Build on children's interests when conversing with them.
- Provide props and opportunities that generate discussions and questions.
- Support children's use of their home language, gestures, communication devices, sign language, and pictures to communicate.
- Talk with children using their families' native language (through interpreters when necessary).
- Create an accepting, culturally diverse environment that is nurturing, supportive, and interesting for all children.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation.
- Ask questions that stimulate children's creativity.
- Expand on what children say by adding information, explanations, and descriptions.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Provide opportunities for your child to talk in social situations with adults and other children.
- As you read to children or talk with them, pause to let them ask questions, make comments, and complete ideas.
- Seek out your child's opinion. For example, ask, "What do you think we need to do?"
- Encourage children to discuss and add to stories as you read to them. Ask "What do you think will happen next?"
- Talk daily about everyday events and activities.
- Use descriptive language. If your child observes, "That's a dog," respond "Yes, that is a big, white dog."
- Show interest in what children have to say by asking open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" response.
- Set an example for good speech and language. Use complete sentences and pronounce words correctly.
- Support children's use of gestures, communication devices, sign language, and pictures as needed to communicate.
- Encourage children to speak the language used in the home. This will not interfere with learning English.

Foundations for Reading

Foundations for reading involves developing knowledge and skills in oral language, vocabulary used in understanding the world, concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and phonology.

Motivation for Reading and Vocabulary and Comprehension Widely Held Expectations

Motivation for Reading – Children begin to:

- Show an interest in books, other print, and reading-related activities, including using and sharing books and print in their play.
- Enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks, simple information books, and poetry read aloud.
- Independently engage in reading behaviors (e.g., turning pages, imitating adults by pointing to words, telling the story).
- Independently engage in writing behaviors (e.g., write symbols or letters for names, use materials at the writing center, write lists with symbols/letters in pretend play, write messages that include letters or symbols).
- Show preferences for favorite books.
- Use books that communicate information to learn about the world by looking at pictures, asking questions, and talking about the information.

Vocabulary and Comprehension – Children begin to:

- Develop knowledge about their world (what things are and how they work) and use this knowledge to make sense of stories and information books.
- Discuss books by responding to questions about what is happening in stories and predicting what will happen next.
- Relate personal experiences to events described in familiar books.
- Ask questions about a story or information in a book.
- Imitate the special language in storybooks and story dialogue (repetitive language patterns, sound effects, and words from familiar stories) and use it in retellings and dramatic play.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide and share fiction and non-fiction books that stimulate children's curiosity.
- Create comfortable and inviting spaces in different parts of the classroom for children to read; stock these reading nooks with a variety of reading materials.
- Provide time when children are encouraged to look at books on their own.
- Promote positive feelings about reading. Allow children to choose books they want to read. Reread favorite books.
- Make multicultural books and materials available to help children develop an awareness of individual differences.
- Create a connection between home and school through such means as developing a take-home book program, sharing books from home, engaging parents in literacy experiences, holding workshops, or creating a newsletter for parents.
- Provide multi-sensory approaches to assist reading (e.g., tape players, computers, and assistive technology).
- Point out authors and illustrators and discuss what makes a book a favorite book.
- Provide children with materials they can use to act out and retell stories (flannel board cutouts, puppets, props, pictures, etc.).
- Respond to children's observations about books and answer their questions.
- Reread books multiple times, changing the approach as children become familiar with the book. On occasion, ask questions that tap their understanding

of why characters are doing things and talk about the meaning of unfamiliar words.

- Make books available in children's home languages.

Strategies for Families

- Read with your child every day.
- Help instill good reading habits by regularly reading books, magazines, and newspapers and discussing what you read.
- Bring into your home a variety of high-quality reading materials that are relevant and interesting to children.
- Talk about connections between your child's personal experiences and events and objects in books you've read.
- Visit the library regularly with your children and let them select favorite books. Suggest to friends and relatives that they give books as gifts.
- Encourage your child to read books along with you, ask questions, and retell the stories. Reread favorite books.
- Use your home language when reading, singing, and playing word games with your child. You will be helping your child learn and enjoy the time you spend together.

Book and Print Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge, and Alphabetic Principle Widely Held Expectations

Book and Print Awareness – Children begin to:

- Be aware of print and understand that it carries a message by recognizing and creating it in different forms and for a variety of functions (e.g., labels and signs).
- Recognize that print can tell people what to do, and understand that print and simple symbols are used to organize classroom activities (e.g., where to store things, when they will have a turn).
- Pretend to read familiar books in ways that mimic adult reading.
- Hold a book upright while turning pages one by one from front to back.
- Occasionally run their finger under or over print as they pretend to read a familiar book.
- Understand some basic print conventions (e.g., concept of letter, concept of word).
- Learn to identify their name and the names of friends.

Alphabet Knowledge – Children begin to:

- Know that letters of the alphabet are a special category and are different from pictures and shapes.
- Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name and in the names of others who are important to them.

Alphabetic Principle – Children begin to:

- Understand that letters function to represent sounds in spoken words.
- Make some sound-to-letter matches, using letter name knowledge (e.g., writes "M" and says "This is Mommy").

Strategies for Early Educators

- Draw children's attention to print in the environment and discuss what it is communicating (e.g., instructions, labels, menus).
- Assist children in creating their own books, class books, and stories.
- Reread books multiple times, changing the approach as children become familiar with the book. On occasion, ask questions that tap their understanding of why characters are doing things and talk about the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Use children's names in daily routines (e.g., to mark turns, keep track of who is present, etc.) to help them become familiar with the letters in their names.
- Discuss letter names in the context of daily activities (as opposed to teaching one letter per week) and provide opportunities for children to hear specific letter sounds, particularly beginning sounds.
- Provide opportunities to explore letters and sounds (e.g., with literacy tools and models such as magnetic letters, rubber stamps, alphabet puzzles, sponge letters, clay, ABC molds, and alphabet exploration software).
- Make books available in children's home languages.

Strategies for Families

- Read to your child every day.
- As you read, call attention to the many different kinds of written materials in your home (labels, newspapers, magazines, cereal boxes, recipe cards, greeting cards) and in the outside world (billboards, menus, signs).
- Read alphabet books. Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Point out letters in familiar names and signs.
- Give children magazines, menus, lists, notes, tickets, and other print materials to use in pretend play.
- Use your home language when reading, singing, and playing word games with your children. You will be helping your child learn and enjoy the time you spend together.

Phonological Awareness
Widely Held Expectations

Phonological Awareness –
Children begin to:

- Enjoy listening to songs, poems, and books that have rhyme and word play and learn the words well enough to complete familiar refrains and fill in missing words.
- Enjoy and repeat rhythmic patterns in poems and songs through clapping, marching, or using instruments to beat syllables.
- Play with the sounds of language, learning to identify and then create rhymes, attending to the first sounds in words.
- Associate sounds with written words, such as awareness that different words begin with the same sound (e.g., Keshia and Katie begin with the same sound).

Strategies for Early Educators

- Read and reread books that have rhymes and refrains. Encourage children to fill in missing words and complete familiar refrains.
- Play word and rhyme games. Sing songs. Repeat chants.
- Discuss letter names in the context of daily activities (as opposed to teaching one letter per week) and provide opportunities for children to hear specific letter sounds, particularly beginning sounds.
- Provide opportunities to explore letters and sounds (e.g., with literacy tools and models such as magnetic letters, rubber stamps, alphabet puzzles, sponge letters, clay, ABC molds, and alphabet exploration software).
- Make available books in children's home languages.

Strategies for Families

- Read and reread books that have rhymes and refrains. Encourage your child to join in.
- Recite nursery rhymes. Sing songs. Play word games.
- Share alphabet books. Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Point out letters in familiar names and signs.
- Use your home language when reading, singing, and playing word games. You will be helping your child learn and enjoy the time you spend together.

Foundations for Writing

Foundations for writing involves a progression of developing skills, beginning with using symbols with meaning, then writing scribbles that have meaning and attempting to make letters.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Use a variety of writing tools and materials (e.g., pencils, chalk, markers, crayons, finger paint, clay, computers).
- Use a variety of writing in their play and for a variety of purposes (e.g., labels, lists, signs, messages, stories).
- Represent thoughts and ideas through drawings, marks, scribbles, and letter-like forms.
- Learn how to tell their thoughts for an adult to write.
- Play with writing letters and mastering conventional letterforms, beginning with the first letter of their name.
- Use known letters and approximations of letters to write their own name.
- Attempt to connect the sounds in a word with its letterforms.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage your child to scribble, draw, and print by keeping markers, crayons, pencils, and paper on hand.
- Talk about what you are doing as you write, to help your child relate writing to everyday life (such as making out a check or creating a shopping list).
- Invite your child to help you write a note or compose a greeting card.
- Respond enthusiastically to the drawings, scribbles, letter-like shapes, and other writing your child produces.
- When your child asks, help with writing familiar words and numbers, such as family names and phone numbers.
- Encourage children to retell experiences and describe ideas and events that are important to them.
- Provide food packages and magnetic letters for your child to explore letters and sounds. Point out writing on packages.
- Accept and celebrate your child's writing attempts, understanding that it takes many years to learn to form letters and spell in conventional ways.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Give children opportunities to draw, scribble, and print for a variety of purposes.
- Provide a variety of tools, such as markers, crayons, pencils, chalk, finger paint, and clay. Provide adaptive writing/drawing instruments and computer access to children with disabilities.
- Promote literacy-related play activities that reflect children's interests by supplying materials such as telephone books, recipe cards, shopping lists, greeting cards, and storybooks for use in daily activities.
- Provide a variety of literacy props in centers (e.g., stamps and envelopes for the post office; blank cards, markers, and tape for signs in the block center).
- Help children use writing to communicate by stocking the writing center with alphabets and cards that have frequently used and requested words (e.g., "love," "Mom," "Dad," and children's names with photos).
- Show step-by-step how to form a letter on unlined paper when a child asks.
- Encourage children to retell experiences and events that are important to them through pictures and dictation.
- Write down what children say and share those dictated writings with them.
- Think aloud as you model writing for a variety of purposes in classroom routines (e.g., thank-you notes, menus, recipes).
- Assist children in making their own books and class books.
- Display children's writing and comment on their successes.
- Use unlined paper for children's writing so they will focus on letter formation instead of letter orientation.

Cognitive Development

- **Mathematical Thinking and Expression**
- **Scientific Thinking and Invention**
- **Social Connections**
- **Creative Expression**

"Children are born true scientists. They spontaneously experiment and experience and reexperience again. They select, combine, and test, seeking to find order in their experiences. "Which is the mostest? Which is the leastest?" They smell, taste, bite, and touch-test for hardness, softness, springiness, roughness, smoothness, coldness, warmness: they shake, punch, squeeze, push, crush, rub, and try to pull things apart."

R. Buckminster Fuller

The Cognitive Development domain focuses on children's natural curiosity and ability to acquire, organize, and use information in increasingly complex ways. In the search for meaning, they learn through playing, exploring, discovering, problem-solving, thinking logically, and representing symbolically.

Preschool children are developing the cognitive framework that will allow them to develop increasingly sophisticated concepts and to communicate with the world they live in. They have a growing awareness of self, family, and community. They typically learn their own names, form ideas about family roles and community helpers, and learn the names of some colors. They begin to understand that their actions have an effect on their environment and are able to think about things that are not present. They begin to understand simple scientific concepts by noticing, wondering, and exploring. They begin to ask questions as they engage in increasingly more focused explorations. They begin to demonstrate good problem-solving skills and also begin to express themselves creatively using a variety of media.

Creativity: *Inspiration Takes Wing*

The feeders outside the window allowed the class to study a variety of birds up close, and one day Nathan and Lucinda decided to build a feeder. As the two children got to work in the carpentry center, their teacher noticed Patima, a new student who spoke little English, quietly watching. Collecting bird replicas from the dramatic play center, the teacher used words, actions, and pictures to explain what was going on and accompanied the child to join them. A lively discussion ensued about how big the feeder needed to be. Lucinda and Patima placed the replica birds end to end and decided to make the feeder big enough for two birds to eat at the same time. Patima shared her observation that birds fling seeds while they eat, prompting the children to fetch a butter tub from housekeeping to glue onto the board. After they had proudly trooped outside to hang their feeder and fill it with seed, the children recounted the steps of the project and collaborated in drawing pictures of each step for the other children to use.

Mathematical Thinking and Expression

An early knowledge of mathematical concepts forms the basis for later learning, not just in mathematics but in other domains as well.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Experiment with and use numbers and counting in their play.
- Recognize and describe common shapes.
- Understand and use words that identify different positions in space (e.g., in, out, under, over).
- Recognize and duplicate simple patterns within their environment using manipulatives, art materials, body movements, etc.
- Sort, classify, and order objects on the basis of one or two attributes (color, shape, size, small to large, short to tall, etc.).
- Describe or demonstrate a sequence of events.
- Understand size and volume and make comparisons (short/tall, big/small, full/empty, length, weight, height, same, more, less).
- Participate in activities that involve non-standard measurement.
- Understand the passage of time within their daily lives (daily routines and the order of events).
- Use a variety of strategies to solve problems.
- Make and check predictions through observations and experimentation.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Make a variety of materials easily accessible for all children for the purpose of developing and refining mathematical knowledge (e.g., blocks and accessories, collections, sand and water accessories, art supplies, dramatic-play props, manipulatives, and literacy materials).
- Prompt thinking and analysis by asking open-ended questions (e.g., "How will you know how many plates you need for the guests at your party?").
- Provide large amounts of uninterrupted time for active exploration.
- Provide a variety of manipulatives that can be counted, sorted, and ordered.
- Schedule multiple counting activities in the context of daily experiences and routines.
- Read stories, sing songs, and act out poems and finger plays that involve counting, numerals, and shapes.

- Use the vocabulary of geometry to identify shapes within the classroom and surrounding environment.
- Display a picture schedule of the daily classroom routine that can be referred to throughout the day.
- Model problem-solving strategies.
- Provide opportunities to observe naturally occurring patterns within the indoor and outdoor environments. Use art materials and manipulatives with children to create patterns (e.g., weaving, painting, stringing beads, and building blocks).
- Talk with children about relevant past and future events.
- Provide opportunities to measure (e.g., "How many steps does it take to walk from the front door to your cubby?" or "How many blocks long is your arm?").
- Provide opportunities to weigh objects (comparing the weight of common classroom objects using a balance scale).
- Participate in activities that involve making observations (e.g., rainfall or changes in temperature).

Strategies for Families

- Play with your children. Talk about what they are doing. Count and use numbers as you play together. Take advantage of every opportunity to count.
- Read books with your child related to numbers, colors, shapes, sizes, patterns, and measurement.
- Provide everyday opportunities to explore math concepts. Ask your child to sort and count groceries or the laundry, help set the table, and predict the number of cups of water it will take to fill a pitcher.
- Set aside, protect, and participate in periods of time every day for free play that is initiated by your child.
- Help children develop mathematical skills through music by singing, dancing, and playing with simple homemade instruments – oatmeal boxes, pots and pans, wooden spoons, or juice cans filled with rice or dry beans.
- Share in the planting and care of a plant or garden. Observe and measure plants as they grow. Keep a journal of your child's observations.
- Help your child organize toys, pointing out concepts such as "in," "on," "under," and "beside."
- Allow your child to help you prepare an afternoon snack. Talk about the recipe and let him measure, pour, and stir the ingredients.
- Cook with your child. Help your child understand how to measure the ingredients and observe the changes in the ingredients as liquid is added and when heat is applied through cooking or baking.

Scientific Thinking and Invention

Scientific thinking and invention refers to the ways in which children use the process of inquiry and thinking to form ideas about the way things are.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Expand knowledge of their environment through play.
- Demonstrate awareness of and respect for their bodies.
- Demonstrate an awareness of seasonal changes and weather conditions.
- Identify, discriminate, and make comparisons among objects by observing physical characteristics.
- Use one or more of the senses to observe and learn about their environment.
- Observe and care for living things (e.g., classroom pets and plants).
- Demonstrate an awareness of ideas and language related to time (e.g., day and night, yesterday, today, tomorrow).
- Demonstrate an awareness of changes that occur in their environment (e.g., freezing/melting, color mixing).
- Ask questions and seek answers about their environment through active engagement with materials.
- Use simple tools for investigation of the classroom and the world.
- Manipulate their environment to produce desired effects and invented solutions to problems (e.g., deciding to attach a piece of string to the light switch so they can independently turn off the lights).
- Represent and demonstrate an understanding of discoveries (drawing, graphing, communicating, etc.).
- Make estimates based on experiences with objects (e.g., "Will this block fit in the same hole?").
- Engage in representational thought (e.g., thinking about things that are not present).
- Understand the uses and roles of various forms of technology.
- Share responsibility by participating in the care of their environment (e.g., chores and recycling).

Strategies for Early Educators

- Engage children in observing events, exploring natural objects, and reflecting on what they learn (e.g., hang a birdfeeder outside the classroom window and use binoculars to observe the visitors; or even better, just go outdoors).

- Give children freedom to come up with their own solutions to problems. Listen to their ideas. Model the thinking process by talking out loud about a problem and reflecting on how it might be solved.
- Model language that encourages children to express wonder, pose questions, and provide evidence of discoveries.
- Create a sensory center to stimulate curiosity and exploration. Mix colors (paint, markers, food coloring, crayons) to see what happens.
- Model and teach responsible behavior. Guide children in the handling and care of pets, plants, and learning tools.
- Provide a science discovery center where children can compare the properties of objects such as shells, rocks, nests, and skeletons. Also include science materials throughout the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Provide simple tools (e.g., magnifying glass, binoculars, eyedropper, sieve, simple microscope) to use in exploration.
- Encourage scientific exploration throughout the classroom (e.g., set up sinking and floating experiments at the water table; provide cooking experiences that encourage the observation of changes in matter; equip the block center with materials that encourage explorations of vehicles and ramps).
- Take class walks throughout the year to collect a variety of objects, observe them carefully, and describe differences in shape, edges, color, texture, and size.
- Provide experiences for children to use a variety of technologies (simple tools, writing utensils, telephone, computer, etc.).
- Expose children to the scientific method of inquiry: observing, questioning, predicting, experimenting, and representing results.
- Plant gardens that change over the seasons. Provide a diversity of plants and trees that attract wildlife (e.g., butterfly bushes, trees for birdhouses, and bird feeders).
- Provide a variety of outdoor natural materials (smooth stones, shells, pinecones, acorns) that children can investigate.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage your children to experiment. Talk to them about what they discover (for example, which toys sink in the bathtub and which float).
- Listen to and build on your child's ideas. Use her interests to help plan family activities and adventures.
- Foster your child's ability to ask questions, form ideas, and speculate about what might happen "if…" Use books from the library, simple experiments, information from the internet, educational videos, and television programs to find answers to questions.
- Provide simple experiences that expand a child's sense of wonder and caring about the environment. Plant a small pot with seeds and guess how long it will take for them to sprout. Keep a record of how long it takes.
- Take your child on nature walks. Take a bag along and collect small rocks, feathers, leaves, and other objects to explore and discuss. Observe wet and dry places and how the sun warms objects it shines on.
- Pick up trash while taking a walk and deposit it in public bins. Talk about how the environment is hurt when people discard trash haphazardly.

Social Connections

Social connections refers to the ability to recognize another's perspective and respond appropriately.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Identify, value, and respect similarities and differences between themselves and others (gender, race, special needs, culture, language, history, and family structures).
- Understand relationships, roles, and rules within their own families, homes, and classroom.
- Participate as a member of the group in a democratic classroom community.
- Observe and talk about changes in themselves and their families over time.
- Make sense of their physical, biological, and social worlds by asking questions and engaging in pretend play.
- Demonstrate awareness of different cultures through exploration of customs and traditions, past and present.
- Identify characteristics of the places where they live and play and the relationships of those places to one another.
- Recognize and identify the roles of community helpers.
- Participate in activities to help others in the community.
- Explore, think about, inquire, and learn about the people in their classroom and community.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Equip a dramatic play area with a variety of props reflecting different aspects of families, communities, and cultures to encourage a true understanding of others.
- Change props according to the interests of the children.

- Provide literature and music that reflect a variety of cultures and traditions.
- Use literature, puppets, and role-playing to help children connect to the feelings of others.
- Give children access to a wide selection of quality multicultural books.
- Implement activities that reflect the similarities and differences among the children and families within the classroom (e.g., do body tracing and provide children with multicultural crayons to represent the variety of skin tones).
- Promote observations and discussions of things that are similar and things that are different.
- Invite community helpers into the classroom.
- Welcome families into the classroom to share their cultures, traditions, and talents.
- Explore the physical, biological, and social world, beginning with your school (e.g., a visit to another classroom) and then into the community, through field trips.
- Involve children in school and community service projects.
- Model cooperation and negotiation.
- Involve the children in the making of rules for the classroom.
- Hold class meetings to discuss concerns and issues that occur in the classroom. Encourage children to use a variety of problem-solving strategies to work through any concerns (e.g., use role-playing and puppets to help children empathize with their peers).

Strategies for Families

- For safety, teach your children their full name, telephone number, and street address and familiarize them with landmarks close to home.
- Take children on outings – to museums, parks, the library, neighborhood fire station, shops, grocery store, and laundry.
- Involve your family in school and community service projects.
- Celebrate family and community traditions. Take your child to local festivals to learn about other cultures. Start family traditions of your own.
- Encourage children to assume responsibility by asking for their input in creating a shopping list and then helping with the shopping itself. Give your child small household chores, such as putting away clothes and toys. Let them make some decisions for themselves (such as whether to brush their teeth first or put on their pajamas).
- Keep maps and globes around your house and let your children see you use them. Before taking a trip, use a map to show your child where you are going and how you plan to get there.
- When you go somewhere, use directional terms (for example, "We need to turn left here" or "Grandma's house is three blocks away from us; at the gas station we will turn right").
- Share relevant work experiences with your children. Take them to your work place, if appropriate.

Creative Expression

Creative expression encompasses self-expression, originality, risk-taking, divergent thinking, and appreciation of cultural diversity.

Widely Held Expectations

Children begin to:

- Participate in art, music, drama, movement, dance, and other creative experiences.
- Use a variety of materials and activities for sensory experiences, exploration, creative expression, and representation.
- Plan and create their own drawings, paintings, and models using various art materials.
- Experience and use learning in all curricular areas, including creative arts, to reinforce learning in other curricular areas (e.g., tying an art or music project into a language development experience).
- Share experiences, ideas, and thoughts about artistic creations.
- Express interest in and show respect for the creative work of others.
- Show creativity and imagination in using materials and in assuming different roles in pretend play situations.
- Develop awareness of different musical instruments, rhythms, and tonal patterns.
- Imitate and recall tonal patterns, songs, rhythms, and rhymes.
- Respond through movement and dance to various patterns of beat and rhythm.

Strategies for Early Educators

- Encourage children to talk about and share their creative expressions with others.
- Provide access to a variety of materials, media, and activities that encourage children to use their imagination and express ideas through art, construction, movement, music, etc.
- Develop classroom procedures that encourage children to move materials from one learning center to another (such as using markers and paper in a dramatic play area).

- Use an abundance of multicultural books, pictures, tapes, and CDs in the classroom.
- Take children to museums, galleries, plays, concerts, and other appropriate cultural activities.
- Invite authors, artists, musicians, and storytellers to the classroom so children can observe firsthand the creative work of a variety of people in the arts.
- Give children opportunities to respond through music, movement, dance, dramatic play, and art (e.g., following expressive movement experiences, ask them to draw a picture of themselves and then tell you about the picture).
- Expose children to a variety of literature experiences, including poetry, musical games, and finger plays.
- Provide appropriate instruments (e.g., maracas, rhythm sticks, bells, tambourines, drums, sand blocks, shakers) for musical experimentation.
- Provide age-appropriate art materials (non-hazardous paints, modeling materials, a wide variety of paper types, writing and drawing utensils of various sizes and types, and collage materials).
- Use a variety of horizontal and vertical surfaces (easels, floor, and walls) and two- and three-dimensional objects (boxes, clay, and plastic containers) for creative expression.
- Play music, provide materials such as scarves, streamers, and bells, and make room indoors and outdoors for children to move freely.
- Encourage children to move and use their bodies in space (e.g., pretending to be a cat, a volcano, or a butterfly).
- In reading stories to children, look for words and images that suggest movement (e.g., "Can you move as softly as the wind blew?" or "This picture of a mountain shows hard, pointed shapes; can you make hard, pointed shapes with your body?").
- Provide space and simple materials (scarves, blocks, play dough) that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage creative play. Brainstorm with children for ideas about materials to enhance their play.
- Make prop boxes to hold basic materials for pretend play (e.g., props for a beauty parlor, post office, pet store, doctor's office).
- Use community outings to introduce new ideas and concepts. Open the classroom to members of the community.
- Demonstrate that you value children's creative expressions by displaying their work in the classroom at their eye level.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage your children to talk about what they create and take time to listen to their thoughts.
- Take them on outings to museums, art galleries, and festivals. Ask what they saw that they liked best, and why.
- Bring home books, tapes, and videos involving creative expression. (Much is available free at public libraries.)
- Create an art box that contains markers, crayons, scissors, paper, tape, and play dough.
- Collect magazines for your child to cut out pictures. Fill a box with string, leftover wallpaper, dress patterns, tissue paper, paper towel rolls, small boxes, fabric, or other such items children can use creatively.
- Sort through old clothing and accessories for dress up and pretend play. Encourage pretend play by keeping an old blanket or sheet and some large boxes on hand for creating tents and other hideouts.
- Listen with your child to appropriate CDs, tapes, and the radio to provide musical experiences that span a variety of tastes. Encourage your child to move to the music. Dance with your child.
- Be a responsive and appreciative audience. When you watch your children moving, name what you see and join them. Say, for example, "You're making circles with your arms. I want to make circles, too!"

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